

Criteria and Sources Used for Development of a Preliminary Habitat Classification System for the Delta Region

Table 1 presents a preliminary habitat classification system for identifying potential CALFED habitats and equivalent habitat types described in the Ecosystem Restoration Program plan. To develop Table 1, several existing and generally accepted habitat classification systems were reviewed. Specific proposed habitat types were selected from the existing classification system that tentatively appeared to best accommodate the range proposed CALFED actions.

The classification system is hierarchial and was developed to assist in development of a final list of NCCP covered habitats. A hierarchial classification system allows for flexibility in identifying potential impacts and benefits of proposed CALFED actions and proposed conservation measures and mitigation strategies for habitats at a level commensurate with the level of specificity of proposed CALFED actions.

Habitat Classification Criteria

Criteria used to develop the preliminary habitat classification system included consideration for:

- the level of acceptance of habitat nomenclature within the scientific community;
- consistency with existing habitat mapping and other data sets;
- consistency with habitat types likely to be affected by CALFED actions; and
- consistency with existing CALFED habitat nomenclature.

Habitat Classification Systems

The following sources describing existing habitat classification systems were consulted in developing the proposed habitat classification system:

- Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States (Cowardin et. al. 1979);
- Classification System for California's Inland Waters (Moyle and Ellison 1991);
- Preliminary Descriptions of the Terrestrial Natural Communities of California (Holland 1986);
- The California Wildlife-Habitat Relationships System (Mayer and Laudenslayer 1988);
- A Manual of California Vegetation (Sawyer and Keeler-Wolf 1995); and

- Draft Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (CALFED 1997).

Moyle and Ellison's (1991) classification for inland waters was not considered feasible system of classification for aquatic systems because it is based on fish assemblages by geographic location rather than definable physical characteristics.